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# The Impact of Challenging Work on Employee's Retention in the Manufacturing Industry in Klang Valley

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**Abstract:** This paper proposed to study employee's retention as one of most concerned issues in the worldwide industries, challenging work impact on employee's retention is the factor will be tested in this research, task identity, skills variety, and autonomy are the variables would be representing the challenging work. Enriching the theoretical framework of challenging work and employee's retention generally and manufacturing industry in Klang Valley specifically is also a crucial for further researches in the future. Specifically, this paper objective is to identify whether challenging work influence the employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley. Furthermore, this research concluded of 463 response collected in a quantitative approach and analysed via SPSS and SEM (AMOS) that challenging work is positively affect the employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang valley. This paper found that there is a significant influence of challenging work on the employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

**Keywords:** Employee's Retention, Challenging Work, Manufacturing Industry, Task Identity, Skills Variety, Autonomy, Klang Valley

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## 1. Introduction

This study is targeting one of the most important human resource management issues, employee's retention is a concern of each privet and public organizations currently. The Malaysian manufacturing industry is basically studied in this research paper to introduce the suggested factors could affect positively the employee's retention to the firms.

In a developing country such as Malaysia, human capital is the main concern in the different industries [1]. One of the main challenging issues in Malaysia is the lack of the employee's retention (Stoughton 2011), specifically in the manufacturing industry as one of the most effective industries on the country's economy [2]. Challenging work is a factor expected to effect the employee's retention as well, in this study challenging work will be examined as significantly effecting the employee's retention.

The employee's turnover is inclining in the whole world industrial countries [3]. Indicated that the presence of the

retention problem in the Malaysian industries [4]. Furthermore, due to the vast of factors could encourage the employees staying longer in the firms, the employee's retention came up as an issue to be studied and find out suggested solutions for it. As reported that the employee's retention is a significant matter to be studied in the Malaysian manufacturing industry [5]. As well as, stated that the interesting challenging job supposed to be examined as a predictor of the employee's retention, job satisfaction, and productivity [6]. In this study challenging work will be tested as a predictor of employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

## 2. Literature Review

This section will go through the previous studies of the employee's retention and challenging work, both independent

variable and dependent variable will be illustrated as it comes through the literature and show the study perspective for the identified factors.

**2.1. Challenging Work**

Challenging work is the interesting job and attractive given tasks to be done by the employees, meaningful work, updated, and flexible duties aggregated in the term of challenging work [7]. Indicated that challenging work is about acting properly and well-reacting toward the given job, vast conditions, knowledge, experiences, skills, and capabilities required to do the job [8]. Accordingly, this study will examine challenging work through job characteristics model, based on the literature this study choose three dimensions to represent the challenging work (Task Identity, Skills Variety, and autonomy). The manufacturing industry required the skilful employees for the sake of creativity and innovation, while in the same time its more routine job more than variety of jobs [9]. Hereby is the argument which this study built upon. Concluded that challenging job is importantly indirectly through job satisfaction enhancing the employee’s retention [10]. Challenging work is one of the most important factor influencing the employee’s retention [11]. Accordingly, this study will test the impact of challenging work on the employee’s retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley specifically.

**2.1.1. Task Identity**

Task identity defined as the complete process of doing a task from the beginning till the end, with known and organized steps and schedules [12]. Another sight on the concept as a manner to deal with job by organized, managed, planned, complete, and monitored way toward developing an environment and working style might help to achieve the employee’s satisfaction [13]. Task identity started as a motivational factor could make the employees enjoying and feeling their turn in the organization overall and in the particular job [14]. Established the task characteristics literature as an internal motivation, represent how organized and planned the task is [15]. Concluded that task identity is mainly effecting job motivation and satisfaction [13]. Found that job characteristics model is affecting employee’s retention [16], the other studies supported that job characteristics model is indirectly affecting employee’s retention. Accordingly, this study is aiming to test the direct relationship between challenging work and employee’s retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

**2.1.2. Skills Variety**

Skills variety is having multi skills to be able to deal with different jobs and being ready for any argent occurs, it could be the ability to acquired and needed skills easily and being flexible and able to learn [17]. Skills variety significantly affecting employee’s retention asserted in [18]. Stated that skills variety as the required multi skills, and different requirements in the individual task, the flexible jobs within the same given duties, and the employees capabilities these

are mainly about skills variety [12]. Generally, better job characteristics such as task identity, skills variety, and autonomy would positively influence the challenging job for better performance and productivity. Concluded that job characteristics model including skills variety is affecting employee’s retention through job satisfaction [19], indicated that challenging work is also affecting employee’s retention [20]. In early studies skills variety found as a predictor of intention to leave [21]. This study is examining challenging job through job characteristics model impact on the employee’s retention.

**2.1.3. Autonomy**

Autonomy is the direct responsibility and decision making for the employees to use their capabilities and their skills during doing their tasks [22]. According to [23] autonomy granted to the employees in the organizations still limited and leashing the employees to implement the orders given by the mangers at most. Stated that autonomy is the most significant and studied factor among the job characteristics model [24], the effect of autonomy on employee’s retention is significantly found in the same study as well. In the recent studies autonomy redefined particularly as the given freedom to the employees to plan, schedule, and describe their individual job and responsibilities [12]. In addition, autonomy is attracting the skillful employees to the firms, and push the employees to stay longer in the same firm [25]. Concluded that autonomy is reflected on the ability of the employees to control their jobs and their ways of achieve the targets [26]. However, this study is aiming to test the effect of autonomy as a challenging work dimension on the employee’s retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

**2.2. Employee’s Retention**

Employee’s retention is an issue facing the Malaysian industries [10], through increasing employee’s turnover ratio and lack of retention strategies. The same study indicated how the different industries in Malaysia losing the employees continuously through the years. The table below summarize increasing of the turnover ratios which led to derive the importance of the employee’s retention in Malaysia.

*Table 1. Turnover Ratio in Malaysian Industries.*

Years/Ratio	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	8.74%	9.68%	10.45%	10.88%	12.64%

The data provided in the table above referred to [10]. Hereby the importance of the employee’s retention came up to be an important topic in Malaysia through the last few years instead of intention to leave, intention to stay, and turnover. It’s crucial to know exactly how to manage a proper environment to keep the employees and enhance their feelings toward their organizations. Employee’s retention is preparing the suitable climate to the employees to be more attracted to their job [27]. The employees are the one and only way for the organizations to get their targets

achieved and enrich the total performance in both individual and group levels, which makes the employee's retention a matter to be concerned about in the different organizations and industries [28]. Andrew Carnegie, the famous industrialist of 19<sup>th</sup> century commented, "Take away my factories, my plants; take away my railroads, my ships, my transportation, take away my money; strip me of all of these but leave me my key employees, and in two or three years, I will have them all again". This study will examine the employee's retention as a dependent variable in the Malaysian manufacturing industry.

### 3. Underpinning Theories

This study has been established on main and important theories in the social science, this section will summarize these theories.

#### 3.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow established a motivational theory to ensure that the employees are motivated and satisfy through getting their needs in the working environment named Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Explained the theory of Maslow in [29] that the five levels of the employee's needs as firstly, physiological needs which it's about the basic needs to stay alive such as food and water. Secondly, safety need which it's about ensuring your life and family are well, and would be in good situation in the future in case your continued in your current working and living conditions. Thirdly, social needs about feeling belonging to the working place, colleagues, and the remaining working environment and conditions, it's all about the social life and daily habits of the employees. Fourthly, esteem needs is mainly about the employees feeling of themselves and their achievement, which it's giving the employees more careness and respect for their turn and effort through make them a part of the organizations and share with them the ideas and take their suggestion. Fifthly, self-actualization which is about promotions, upgrading the employee's level and knowledge. According to one of the latest discussions and interpretations for the same theory, stated that self-actualization is related to challenging job and task identity [30].

#### 3.2. The Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The needs of Maslow theory is divided into two classes in Herzberg's theory, motivation factors creating job satisfaction if it's achieved, and hygiene factors creating job dissatisfaction as a consequences of the absence of any factor. In this study motivation factors are mainly affecting

the variables of this study. According to [31] the motivation factors are motivating the employees and turning them to satisfy and productive employees. Accordingly, since the employees are satisfy and their needs are achieved they will intend to stay longer in the firms.

#### 3.3. Job Characteristics Model

It's established by [32] to identify the job most important descriptions toward the most suitable working environment for the employees. Job characteristics model contain five factors, (task variety, skills variety, autonomy, task significance, feedback). Concluded in [33] that the description of the work embodied in job characteristics model is effecting the employee's retention. The model has been developed by adding some factors and eliminating others through the previous studies in the different research areas, generally these are the most popular and accepted factors to the different industries.

According to [34] the employee's retention is importantly declining the wasted money on training and recruiting new employees. Concluded that the employee's retention absolutely leading the firms forward, toward competitiveness, efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness [3]. The knowledge management and retention embodied in retaining the employees in the firms [35], and significantly effecting the revenue of the organizations positively [36]. This study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the study's field, to enrich the literature of employee's retention generally and establish the base to the future research. To achieve the aims of the study and based on the above literature and supporting theories the research set up research objective, question, and hypothesis to examine the impact of challenging work on employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

Research objective: To identify whether challenging work influence the employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

Research question: Does challenging work influence the employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

*Research hypothesis: Challenging work (CW) significantly influences employee retention (ER) in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley*

### 4. Conceptual Framework

The previous literature and hypothesis developed a conceptual framework to be studied in this research paper.

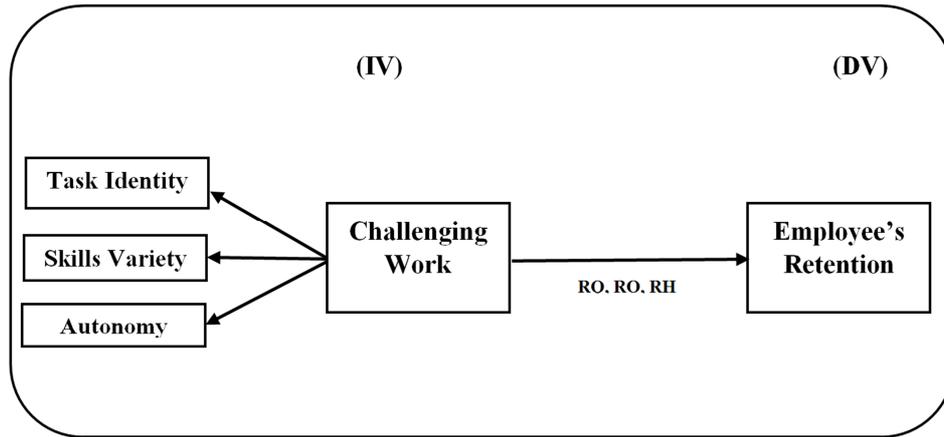


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework.

Conceptual framework: adapted from [37].

### 5. Data Analysis Method

This study is a quantitative study, the data collected through a questionnaire survey distributed among the employees in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley. Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) measurement used in this research to question the challenging work dimensions. Eighteen factories included in the respondents of this study as a sample, the factories all located in Klang Valley to represent the targeted area of the study. 463 sample were returned out of 700 distributed survey which it's a huge sample size led the researcher to use AMOS software to analyse the data through SEM method. While the validity and multicollinearity found via SPSS to ensure the validity, reliability, and usability of the collected data to be analysed.

### 6. Results and Findings

#### 6.1. Demographic Profile

The analysis results indicated that the demography description for the sample as most of the employees of the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley are 31-40 years old, 81.4% of them men with 1-3 years working period in the same factory of 51.6%, 30.5% of them got the high school education level only and 68.5% of them married.

There are further details showing the specific demography information to clarify the respondent's descriptions in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley. These information could benefit the researcher to recognize the nature of the industry which it's surely would be useful for the analysis purpose, to identify the strengthen and weaknesses of the industry itself.

Table 2. Respondents Profile.

Variable	Group	Number	Percent
Age	19-22	49	10.6%
	23-25	72	15.6%
	26-30	147	31.7%
	31-40	164	35.4%
	More Than 40	31	6.7%
Gender	Woman	86	18.6%
	Man	377	81.4%
The Period in the Present Job (YEAR)	1-3	239	51.6%
	3-5	135	29.2%
	5-10	80	17.3%
	More Than 10	9	1.9%
Education Background	High School	141	30.5%
	Diploma	97	21%
	Degree	80	17.3%
	Postgraduate	17	3.6%
	Others	128	27.6%
Marital Status	Single	146	31.5%
	Married	317	68.5%

#### 6.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

The data analysis require some initial examinations to

confirm the validity and reliability of the study's items. The loadings of the study's variables is always important to the next analysis stages. Cronbach's alpha loading values of each

construct should be at least equal to or higher than 0.7. According to [38] there are some responses would be missing parts of the data, these surveys better to be eliminated to ease the data analysis process, indeed the analysed data didn't include any missing data. Indicated that the normality of the data is an important to identify the usability and readiness of the data to the statistical analysis stage [39].

Mean and median values are among the most important values to explore in the normality test, skewness and kurtosis as well has to be included with standard error for each. The

big sample size hardly to score high normality values [39]. Stated that optimal values for skewness and kurtosis as - 2 to +2 for skewness and - 7 to +7 for kurtosis [39]. Variance inflation factor (VIF) indicating the multicollinearity of the independent variables, the higher the multicollinearity is negatively affecting the regression among the variables of the study, VIF supported by the variance values as well indicating the regression of the variables [40]. Indicated that VIF values must be higher than 1.0 and tolerance higher than 0.5 [41].

**Table 3.** Evaluation Measurement Values.

Construct/Measurement value	Task Identity	Skills Variety	Autonomy	Employee's Retention
Cronbach's Alpha	0.756	0.857	0.862	0.863
Mean	2.2799	2.2799	2.1413	2.4251
Median	2.4000	2.4000	2.2000	2.6000
Mode	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
skewness	.223	.223	.282	-.031
Std. Error of Skewness	.113	.113	.113	.113
kurtosis	-.178	-.178	-.546	-.536
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.226	.226	.226	.226
Tolerance	.611	.619	.628	-
VIF	1.698	1.616	1.592	-
Missing	000	000	000	000

As the accepted values for the measurement's values by previous researchers mentioned above the results scores were accepted and confirmed the usability of the data to be analyzed. Cronbach's alpha were for task identity, skills variety, autonomy, and employee's retention respectively values of (0.756, 0.857, 0.862, 0.863) which it's all higher than 0.7. Skewness values were (.223,.223,.282, -.031) respectively which it's all between -2 to +2. Followed by Kurtosis values of (-.178, -.178, -.546, -.536) which it's all between -7 to +7. Tolerance values scored (.611,.619,.628) respectively on task identity, skills variety, employee's retention which tits all higher than 0.5. And VIF value scores of (1.698, 1.616, 1.592) respectively which it's all higher than 1.0.

Accordingly the problem of inter-correlation happen once the factor loadings on their variables lower than 0.5 or higher than 1.0 [39]. The loading of the five items for each dimension (task identity, skills variety, autonomy) scored lowest value of.612 and highest.992 with organized and normal accepted loading for each dimension on the variable (challenging work). There is one item among employee's retention items scored a value lower than 0.5 has been eliminated.

**Table 4.** Pattern Matrix.

FACTORS				
ITEMS	ER	TI	SV	AO
ER2	.723			
ER3	.802			
ER4	.786			
ER5	.945			
TI1		.959		
TI2		.780		
TI3		.801		

FACTORS				
ITEMS	ER	TI	SV	AO
TI4		.829		
TI5		.992		
SV1			.933	
SV2			.612	
SV3			.877	
SV4			.754	
SV5			.917	
AO1				.930
AO2				.651
AO3				.844
AO4				.868
AO5				.908

### 6.3. The Structural Model

The (SEM) structural equation modelling analysis divided into two main parties, first is the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), second is confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Starting by the (EFA) done via SPSS to prepare the data for the analysis, which it's been done and shown in the previous table ( factors loadings) Pattern matrix, there was only one item deleted due to low loading less than 0.5 (ER1). Followed by the (CFA) second order CFA analysis has been done for the variable challenging work with employee's retention and forward better model fit the items SV2 and AO2 deleted to score better model fit measurement values.

According to [39], [42] the measurement values which it's identify the fit of the model are  $RMSEA \leq 0.08$ ,  $CMIN/DF \leq 3$ ,  $CFI \geq 0.9$ ,  $GFI \geq 0.9$ ,  $PCLOSE > 0.05$ ,  $RMR > 0.08$ ,  $TLI \geq 0.9$ . The structural model as attached below has scored the accepted values for goodness of the model, to indicate the acceptance of the variables of the study.

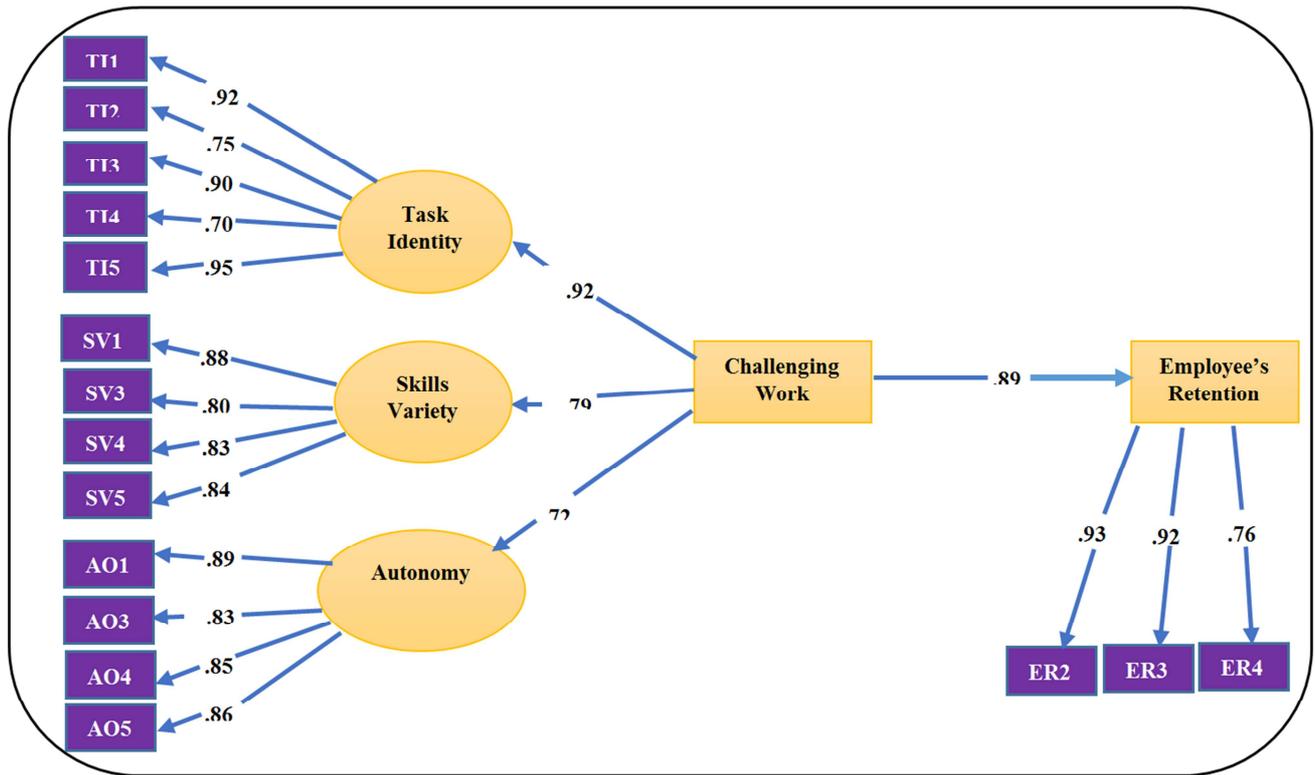


Figure 2. Structural Model.

The analysis as in the figure above shows the standard regression weight of the dimensions (task identity, skills variety, autonomy) to the independent variables (challenging work) scored values of (0.92, 0.79, 0.72) respectively. And the standard regression weight of challenging work on the employee's retention scored a value of 0.89. The P value of the challenging work on employee's retention scored value of 0.000 indicating a significant relationship between challenging work and employee's retention.

There are some measurement values in AMOS could judge

the model fit, the table below includes these values which it's indicating the goodness of the model fit and accepted values approved by the specialist and previous studies [39], [42].

Table 5. Model Fit Values.

RMSEA	CMIN/DF	CMIN	CFI	IFI	TLI	PCLOSE
0.048	1.619	198.413	0.981	0.981	0.979	0.740

Summarizing the study objective, question, and hypothesis as the results concluded in the table below:

Table 6. Results of Structural Model (IV and DV).

Path	Standard Regression Weight	Sig	Result
Challenging work > employee's retention	0.89	0.000	Accepted

According to the mentioned results, this paper found that the research objective achieved by finding a significant influence for challenging work on employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley. In addition the research question answered that there is a high significant and positive influence for challenging work on employee's retention, with acceptance of the hypothesis which predicted the significant influence for challenging work on employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley.

### 7. Conclusion

This research paper studied the employee's retention as an issue facing the worldwide, lacking in the strategies of employee's retention is a target of the managers, employees, and shareholders of each organization to be solved toward

better retention strategies through specific factors. The study analysed the impact of challenging work on employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley. The findings of this study concluded as there is a significant impact for challenging work on employee's retention in the manufacturing industry in Klang Valley. For future researches recommend to study different factors effect employee's retention, the different industries such as service and hospitality industries would come out with optimal results to support the Malaysian industries toward more sustainability, competitiveness, and productivity.

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